

The IFLA Pre-Conference in Florence: Art and Libraries, History and Future

In August 2009, some days before the annual World Libraries and Information Congress of IFLA was opened in Milan, the Art Libraries Section organized a two-days pre-conference in Florence. A pre-conference or 'satellite-meeting' has important advantages, since it allows to focus on specific topics of particular interest for the members of a section. IFLA 'satellite-meetings' are also completely independent from the organizing mechanism of the IFLA main conference, which is an important condition for more freedom and autonomy in the decision-making process.

Of course, Florence was not chosen by chance. As one of the most fascinating Italian cities, the Tuscan capital is extremely attractive. However, the main reason for this choice was its high-ranking position in the field of research in history of art, based on local institutions and libraries, which are well integrated in a broad and efficient international network. As soon as the idea of a pre-conference in Florence arose, it seemed promising to concentrate on this particular factor.

Four Florentine institutions – the Library of the Uffizi Gallery, the Biblioteca Marucelliana, the Library of the Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies (Villa I Tatti) and the Library of the Kunsthistorisches Institut (Max-Planck-Institut) – started a profitable collaboration and formed a team responsible to define the conceptual guidelines and to organize the whole event. All of them are involved in research activities on artistic and cultural heritage of Florence, but each has different key interests and tasks: the Uffizi Library is closely connected to one of the most important art collections of the world; the Biblioteca Marucelliana is an outstanding example of a formerly private collection of books and drawings; the Library of the Villa I Tatti belongs to the Harvard University and is a sort of academic department abroad, dedicated to interdisciplinary research in the field of Italian Renaissance; finally, the

German Kunsthistorisches Institut is an international platform for research in Italian history of art.

They all together organized a conference, which had two primary goals: first, to present the host institutions to an international audience and to illustrate the variety of their research activity, their future projects and their institutional formats; and second, to give guest speakers from 8 countries the opportunity to present new developments and initiatives in art libraries. The conference took place in four different places and included various visits of other places of interest, like the Biblioteca Laurenziana and the Biblioteca Riccardiana. In addition to the papers given by the speakers during the conference, the conference included introductions into the hosting institutions. A manifold spectrum of institutional and Library activities were presented to a group of more than 60 participants of the conference, coming from 17 countries all over the world.